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INVESTIGATION OF SUBSTANDARD QUALITY  
OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS IN HUNGARY

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Numerous manufacturers, as well as their supervisory authorities, fail to pay any attention to the quality of consumer goods. The market is flooded by large quantities of poor or entirely useless merchandise which is being bought only through necessity, and industry is forced to accept huge volumes of inferior raw materials, semifinished products, and machines.

On the basis of complaints received from a wide segment of the population, the AEK (Allami Ellenorzo Kozpont, State Control Center) recently conducted an investigation, over a period of several months, in various branches of industry and commerce, in an effort to formulate constructive recommendations for the improvement of the quality of products.

The investigation disclosed that despite difficulties in procurement, and the obsolescence of part of the technical equipment, the quality of all products can be improved considerably.

Frequently, it is claimed that improvement of quality is impossible in view of obsolete, inefficient, or small-capacity equipment. However, experience shows that such claims are not valid. Complaints are numerous, for example, about the quality of bread, and the managers of the baking industry blame the primitive equipment for the poor quality. Nevertheless, good bread is often baked with the same equipment and from the same raw materials. The real reason for the defect lies in the fact that the numerous operations, which good quality requires, are performed superficially and incompetently in many bread factories. Thus, insufficient attention is being paid to the bolting of the flour, and the kneading and leavening of the dough; also, in many places the cleaning of the premises and the regulation of the temperature of ovens are neglected.

Obsolete equipment undoubtedly handicaps efficient operations but should not prevent the management from improving the quality. In certain plants the managements have overlooked simple solutions. Many rural milk collecting centers, for example, lack ice pits and expose the milk to spoilage during the summer months. Such enterprises believe that all equipment must be supplied to them by outside agencies and that they are not expected to help themselves.

The managers of enterprises which produce inferior goods often blame substandard raw materials for the poor quality of their products. The solution of this problem is simple. The processing industries should refuse to accept inferior raw materials.

The Kabel- es Muanyaggyar (Cable and Plastics Factory) blamed poor raw materials for the inferior quality of the sound records that it produced. However, the investigation disclosed that the material had been accepted and used for many months without quality control.

In most branches of the food industry -- including the dairy, meat, packing, sweets, and vegetable oil industries -- the poor quality of raw materials is generally held responsible for the defects of the finished products. Yet, the investigation of AEK disclosed that the raw materials had not been carefully inspected prior to processing. In fact, inferior raw material is frequently accepted on purpose, to serve as an excuse for defects in processing.

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The frequently heard argument that quantity production and plan fulfillment conflict with good quality is untenable. In the final analysis, production and marketing of inferior goods diminish the quantitative end results by diverting materials and labor from the production of satisfactory goods.

The following resolution of the Council of Ministers is a welcome measure: "certain especially inferior products made by plants which habitually turn out rejects be exhibited in the show-windows of retail stores with labels showing the names of the manager and chief engineer of the responsible plant."

It has been pointed out that the inspectors of the processing plants have no financial incentive for discharging their duties conscientiously. In some enterprises, for example, the inspectors receive premiums if they approve a large quantity. In other words, the inspector diminishes his earnings if he fails to compromise in fulfilling his duty. This system has been found in numerous enterprises, including Budafoki Zomancedenygyar (Budafok Enamelware Factory), Haztartasi Eszkoz-es Badoggyar (Household Appliance and Sheet Metal Factory), Budapesti Konzervgyar (Budapest Packing Works), etc.

Another source of trouble is the disregard for the regulations pertaining to the financial responsibility of workers for rejects. The Orion Radiogyar (Orion Radio Factory), for example, sustained unusually heavy losses as a result of the rejects of defective work in recent years. Nevertheless, the penalties assessed against workers amounted to only 0.2 percent of the amount of the loss. Such negligible penalties are, of course, no deterrent to the production of inferior goods.

One of the constant complaints of consumers is that quality is frequently changed. The consumers demand that when it becomes necessary to make such a change, the producer should openly admit the change instead of misleading the buyers and that the inferior merchandise should be sold at a lower price. The Szombathelyi Cipogyar (Szombathely Shoe Factory), for example, produced at the beginning of this year several thousand pairs of women's shoes from inferior oxhide. The shoes were sold at standard prices, disregarding the decree of the Council of Ministers which provides that the price for substandard merchandise must be lowered.

Commerce is also responsible for preventing inferior goods from flooding the market. It has failed to fulfill this important function because of lack of vigilance and unsatisfactory examination of the merchandise. At the end of last year, for example, the wholesale trade accepted several thousand defective garments from the Vaci Kotszovo Gyar (Vac Knitting and Spinning Mill) without any comment. At the same time, Ruhazati Bolt (Clothes Store) accepted women's dresses from the Minta Noiszabo Ktsz (Model Women's Dress Tailoring Cooperative). The dresses had previously been rejected by the wholesale trade. The manager of the store even boasted that this defective merchandise had been sold in 2 days at regular prices. He violated the decree of the Council of Ministers.

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